

Sentinel

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Tax Election Nov. 8

Live Oak School Mural Causes A Controversy

A controversy over whether the new mural on Live Oak School is overtly religious sparked Tuesday evening's meeting of the Live Oak School District board of trustees.

According to reports, Trustee Mike Pisenti objected to the mural, set to be dedicated Thursday at 9:30 a.m., because of its religious nature. Superintendent Duncan Coleman maintained that the Mayan-themed mural was cultural; based on Indian myths.

"It is the multitude of cultures in our country that make it so rich," said Coleman today. "The Native American culture is one of these."

When contacted by The Sentinel, Pisenti reaffirmed his opposition to the mural, and promised a protest at the Thursday dedication. "Basically, if Christ is restricted from our schools, so should any other heathen religion."

Claiming he and other board members were misled by the El Tortuga Patrol as to the mural's symbolic significance, Pisenti said he would like to see the mural painted over or removed. He said he felt the mural, which depicts a Mayan legend similar to that of Sisyphus, mixed religion in with the schools.

While not divulging details of the planned protest, Pisenti would only say, "The Christians will be there to protest. The word is being spread."

In other business, trustees authorized a revenue increase, or tax maintenance election for Nov. 8, and instructed Coleman to initiate a campaign on behalf of the measure. Over two years ago, Coleman explained, the voters authorized an increase of \$146 per child for a three-year period.

That period is almost over, and the district

will request another three year maintenance allowance at the same level. "We're hoping that in three years, the Serrano decision will be cleared up. We hope to survive until tax reforms promised in the legislature arrive. Otherwise, we'll be among the lowest districts in the county as far as revenue per child," said Coleman today.

Elsewhere on the financial front, Coleman said that Live Oak has turned into a basic-aid district, meaning that local taxpayers will be footing a bigger part of the bill for their children's education. All that Live Oak can now expect from the state is \$125 per student per year, Coleman said.

"It means unless you get poor again, you're considered a wealthy district," said Coleman, attributing the new status to a 25 per cent increase in assessed valuations in the Live Oak area. Calling it a "milestone," Coleman said Live Oak is now "\$100,000 into being a basic aid district." While not exactly overjoyed at the new status, Coleman said "it would take a lot more students to reverse the situation."

Coleman also revealed that there will be a forum discussion held between trustees and Supervisor Phil Baldwin tentatively scheduled for Aug. 10 at 7:30 p.m. at the district office in Green Acres School. The discussion will cover several issues of interest to area residents, and the public is encouraged to attend.

The final budget will be adopted next Tuesday at 7:30 p.m. in the district office, and Coleman announced to the board that there was a \$17,000 increase in revenues and a \$5,000 increase in expenditures over his previously-reported estimates.